

# Archival Minute

November 2015

## ULYSSES SYLVESTER CONN—PART III

As stated in the first part of this series on the life of President U. S. Conn primary sources are extremely scarce. There are newspaper accounts of addresses Conn gave to various groups on and off campus that include direct quotations from the address, but for the most part they only summarize or give the topic of the talk. There are some letters to the editor written by Conn. There are also messages, usually some sort of greeting or report on progress at the college, published in the *Spizzerinktum*, *The Goldenrod*, or other college publication. Otherwise any biography of Conn must necessarily rely mainly on secondary sources.

Initially I had intended to complete this series of on U. S. Conn in this Archival Minute, but it looks as if I have enough (secondary) material to write two (or even three) parts. (There's also the commitment to keep these Archival Minutes shorter.) After completing the series on U. S. Conn I'm planning to take a look at Mrs. Conn and the Conn's daughter, Ardath.



### SHORT NEWS ITEMS

There are a number of few short notices of social and business activities typically found in small town newspapers (as well as the college student newspaper in the early days) that pertain to President Conn and his family. These provide various degrees of information, from the mundane ("*President U. S. Conn returned Monday evening from Lincoln where he attended a meeting of the state normal board*") to the more significant or informative.

It's difficult to build a biography based on these short notices alone as they often provide only minimal information—scattered pieces of a puzzle, one might say—that leave the researcher wanting to know more of the details—the missing pieces. It is possible, however, to group some

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similar short news items together to draw a tentative conclusion or make a point or to help piece together a fuller (albeit still incomplete) picture of a person's life and the time in which they lived. Sometimes these short notices can serve as a type of foundation upon which a more detailed narrative can be constructed using material from other sources. Here a few examples with comment:

### **AUTOMOBILE AND TRAVEL**

- *President and Mrs. U. S. Conn of the State Normal went to Omaha Saturday and returned Monday with a fine new Carter car. (The Wayne Herald, May 9, 1912)*
- *President U. S. Conn and Professor J. T. House of the State Normal took an automobile jaunt to a number of neighboring towns yesterday. They visited the schools at Wakefield, Emerson and Pender. (The Wayne Herald, May 16, 1912)*
- *President U. S. Conn and Professor I. H. Britell made a drive in the former's automobile Tuesday covering 125 miles. They stopped at different northeast Nebraska points and talked to the students of high schools. It was a booster trip for the State Normal, and will be found to be effective. (The Wayne Herald, May 23, 1912)*
- *President and Mrs. Conn went to Sioux City Saturday afternoon to get their auto which they had to leave there recently on account of the heavy rain. (The Wayne Herald, August 29, 1912)*

This is a 1912 Cartercar, no doubt similar to the car owned by U. S. Conn. The car was manufactured by the company founded by Byron J. Carter in 1905. General Motors purchased the company in 1909. GM ceased production of the car in 1915.

In the second and third items we see U. S. Conn putting his new car to use in service to the college (in the days before there was a motor pool of state cars). He and other faculty traveled to area high schools to recruit students for the State Normal,

*“with a view to bringing the advantages of the Normal before the young men and women who are completing the work of the home school”* as



*The Wayne Herald* stated in the "State Normal News" column, also in the May 16 issue. It was not unusual for Conn (and State Normal faculty) to travel to area schools not only to recruit but also to give commencement addresses.

The last item tells us something of the perils of early travel by automobile before the widespread availability of paved roads (there are a few stories of others facing the same predicament).

## RECREATION

- *At present, President Conn is enjoying a short but needed vacation, fishing and hunting near Detroit, Minn. (The Goldenrod, October 1913)*
- *President and Mrs. Conn and daughter Ardath spent part of August in the mountains of Colorado, making the trip overland in their new car. (The Goldenrod, October 1916)*
- *President and Mrs. U. S. Conn and daughter, Miss Ardath and Miss Josephine Mack [a faculty member] returned last week from an automobile trip to Denver and other western points. (The Wayne Herald, August 29, 1918)*
- *President U. S. Conn of the Wayne State Normal, went to St. Paul, Minn., last week and expected to do some fishing in neighboring lakes before returning home. He intended to be gone a week. (The Wayne Herald, September 15, 1919)*
- *President U. S. Conn and wife and Mrs. P. H. Kohl left by automobile Monday to spend ten days among the lakes in Minnesota. (The Wayne Herald, August 11, 1921)*
- *Mrs. U. S. Conn and Miss Ardath Conn, who spent a couple months in California, started home last Friday. They stopped at Salt Lake City enroute [sic] here and arrived home last evening. (The Wayne Herald, April 23, 1925)*
- *Pres. and Mrs. U. S. Conn arrived home Monday from a few weeks' trip to Texas. They went to San Antonio and Laredo. They also went to Mexico. (The Wayne Herald, January 12, 1928)*

From these we see that U. S. Conn enjoyed fishing and hunting (usually in Minnesota, or, as indicated in other news items, Lake Okoboji in Iowa). From other news stories (of greater length) we know he was also a golfer, even participating in country club tournaments.

We also see that the Conns enjoyed travelling. Even though travel by train was still common, the Conns often travelled by automobile. They often visited relatives back in Indiana, but they also travelled to the western and southwestern United States and Mexico. At times Mrs. Conn would travel by herself or with her daughter without President Conn.

## LAND INVESTMENTS

- *President U. S. Conn of the Wayne State Normal left Friday afternoon for Cheyenne Wells, Colo., to look after the wheat harvest on his land near there. On his way back he stopped at Lincoln to attend a meeting of the state normal board. (The Wayne Herald, August 4, 1921)*
- *President U. S. Conn of the State Teachers College has bought of A. N. Matheny and William McCabe 240 acres, six miles southwest of Wayne. The consideration was \$175 an acre. The deal was made through the Kohl Land & Investment [C]ompany. (The Wayne Herald, January 18, 1923)*
- *Dr. U. S. Conn recently sold his 240-acre farm six miles southwest of Wayne to Henry H. Westerhouse, consideration being \$35,000. The deal was made through the Fred G. Philleo agency. (The Wayne Herald, September 19, 1929)*
- *Dr. U. S. Conn sold his residence near 7th and Logan yesterday to Miss Ruth Pearson. (The Wayne Herald, August 29, 1935)*

These demonstrate Conn's interest in land investment. Given the fact that he had grown up on a farm, it's not surprising for him to have an interest in owning farm land and farming. His owning land in Colorado may have a connection to his entrance into a business association several years earlier.

On April 4, 1916 the Wayne Investment Company was incorporated. Among the names attached to the notice of incorporation appearing in the August 3, 1916 *Wayne Herald* are several prominent Wayne businessmen, including Wayne banker James T. Bressler, and two men associated with the State Normal, W. D. Redmond, the registrar, and President U. S. Conn. The stated purpose of the corporation was

*the purchase and sale of bonds and other personal property, real estate mortgages, negotiable instruments, loaning money, the purchase and sale of cultivated lands, the purchase and sale of unimproved lands, the purchase and sale of real estate on commission, to purchase or lease, sell and convey such real estate as may be necessary or incident in conducting its said business, and the performance of such other acts and things as may be incident and necessary to the main powers of the corporation.*

An article with the headline "Local Capitalists Buy Colorado Land" appeared in the April 6, 1916 issue of *The Wayne Herald*. Although the article does not use the name Wayne Investment Company, it appears that the article is most likely referring to this corporation as many of the names listed also appear in the notice of incorporation, including that of U. S. Conn, and the article was published only two days after the corporation was formed.

This article states that these “*local capitalists*” had “*bought a tract of 26,000 acres of land in Cheyenne [C]ounty, Colo., with the intention of dividing and reselling it.*”

Cheyenne Wells, where Conn’s land was located, is the county seat of Cheyenne County, Colorado. Obviously he could not have worked the farm in Colorado himself and so must have rented it out or hired someone to manage it for him. As far as his farm near Wayne is concerned, it’s unclear if he did any work on the farm himself. However, it’s extremely unlikely that he would have the time to do even minimal work on the farm. Conn also owned farms in his home state of Indiana.

The reference to his residence near 7th and Logan must have been to a house he owned but rented out as there was a home for the president on campus on the site of the present library. There was no reason for him to reside in a home off campus. There is also evidence to his owning other property in the City of Wayne such as this real estate transfer record from June of 1913:

- *I.H. Britell [Wayne State faculty member] to U. S. Conn, lot 12 and north half of lot 11, block 3, Lake’s add. Wayne.*
- *U.S. Conn to I.H. Britell, lot 10 and south half of lot 11, block 2, Lake’s add. Wayne.*

## HEALTH

- *Pres. And Mrs. Conn went to Sioux City last Thursday afternoon to consult a doctor in regard to the former. Mrs. Conn returned Friday and Pres. Conn planned to come home after a few days. (The Wayne Herald, May 29, 1924)*
- *President U. S. Conn of the Wayne State Teachers College went to Sioux City Monday to spend a few days in the interest of his health (The Wayne Herald, June 26, 1924)*
- *President and Mrs. Conn plan to stay in or near Wayne during the vacation, as the former is still under the care of a Sioux City doctor and must have frequent trips there. (The Goldenrod, July 21, 1924)*
- *Miss Ardath Conn who was conducting music appreciation work in Fargo, N.D., last week was taken ill with appendicitis and underwent an operation at the hospital in Rochester, Minn., Friday. At last report she is improving. Mrs. U.S. Conn went to Rochester last Thursday in response to Miss Ardath’s illness. Pres. U.S. Conn went to Sioux City Sunday for treatments and he plans to return home next Sunday if he hears further encouraging reports from his daughter. (The Wayne Herald, July 31, 1924)*
- *Many friends of Pres. U.S. Conn will be pleased to know that he is much improved from his illness of the past summer. (The Wayne Herald, September 4, 1924)*

Nothing more is known of this illness of President Conn or what brought it on, nor the nature of the treatments. The fact that he had to make “frequent trips” to see the doctor in Sioux City suggests it may have been fairly serious, yet not serious enough for Conn to be hospitalized—unless “*spend[ing] a few days in the interest of his health*” was a euphemism for “hospitalized.”

In any case, evidently there were no lasting effects (that we know of). It was not serious enough for him to curtail his duties as president. He apparently continued to lead an active life and enjoyed good health afterwards, although there was this brief news report about three years later:

*Dr. U. S. Conn left Monday December 11 for Lincoln to attend the meeting of the State Normal Board. After attending this meeting, Doctor and Mrs. Conn left for Hot Springs [Arkansas?] and other points for a few weeks trip. Doctor Conn wishes to take medical treatment while there as well as to avoid some of the severe cold of mid winter [sic] in Nebraska. (The Goldenrod, December 19, 1927)*

There’s no way to know from the information available if this “*medical treatment*” had any connection to his previous illness or was just for his general health and relaxation.

Returning to the first story, it’s interesting that his daughter, Ardath, became ill at the same time and that the newspaper did mention the nature of her illness—appendicitis—but not her father’s.

By the way, it was not that unusual for people from Wayne to travel to the Mayo Clinic in Rochester for special treatment and surgery at that time. But even with the popularity of Rochester for medical services, it’s a mystery why Ardath Conn travelled all the way from Fargo to Rochester—a distance of over 300 miles—for her surgery in a possible emergency situation. Also, one may wonder why U. S. Conn went to Sioux City for treatment rather than Rochester when so many from Wayne went there. Was it because he didn’t want to be that far away from the campus?

To these short items we can add some newspaper articles of greater length coupled with other sources that do fill in some more details of Conn’s life and character.



## FAITH AND MORALS

*President Conn led the Bible study class of the Y. M. C. A. in their meeting on Wednesday evening. (The Wayne Herald, November 10, 1910)*

The idea of a state college president leading a Bible study on campus would be unheard of today, being seen by many as a breach of the principle of separation of Church and State. However, at that time the separation of Church and State was not as sharply defined as it is today. For example, a Bible was found among the items in the cornerstone of the Physical Industrial Building (1916) when that building was torn down in the 1970s (as well as that of the Art-Commerce Building from the Pile years). Furthermore, according to accounts of the laying of the cornerstones of other buildings—among these the Administration Building (now Brandenburg Education) (1914), Niehardt (1929), and Pile (1932)—a Bible is among the items included in the cornerstone.

Returning for a moment to the days of the Nebraska Normal College, the 1909-1910 catalog printed a list of “*special features*” of the NNC that included: “*The moral and religious interest of each student is carefully guarded*” and “*The College is strictly non-sectarian, but is thoroughly Christian.*”

While the Wayne State Normal, being a state institution, could most certainly not be characterized as “*thoroughly Christian,*” it could be said that the idea of “*carefully guard[ing]*” the “*moral and religious interest of each student*” was consistent with the mission of the state school under U. S. Conn.

President Conn was a member of the Presbyterian Church in Wayne and occasionally spoke at the church on current issues (see below). His moral values appear to have been solidly conservative and traditional.

Ray H. Mattison (1903-1980) attended Wayne State intermittently during the 1920s and early 1930s. He completed his B.A. in education in 1934 and went on to earn an M.A. in history and take some coursework toward a doctorate. Mattison worked many years with the U. S. National Park Service including 15 years as historian in the Omaha office. In 1965 he took a position as Superintendent of the State Historical Society of North Dakota.

During his career he wrote many articles focusing on the history of the western United States. One of his last works—perhaps the last—was an unpublished manuscript, “As I Saw It: The Recollections of a Nebraska Maverick, 1903-1978.” A note for this item on the Nebraska State Historical Society website states:

*Refusing to romanticize the past, Mattison's account is brutally honest about family, school, farm life, interpersonal relationships, college life at Wayne State College, struggles during the Depression, employment experiences, and his views on religion and politics.*

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/lib-arch/research/manuscripts/family/ray-mattison.htm>

An excerpt of that manuscript that deals with his years in Wayne is held by the Wayne State Archives. In that manuscript Mattison comments about U.S. Conn:

*President Conn, whom we nicknamed 'Prexy,' ran the campus like a mother superior would a convent. The school, he believed was in loco parentis and he operated it accordingly. . . . The girls in the dormitories were required to be in their rooms by 8:00 p.m., as I recall, each night during the week. On week ends [sic] they were allowed to stay out until either 10:00 or 10:30 p.m. I understand the same rules applied to the boys at an earlier period, which I was never able to verify, but Prexy found it impossible to enforce them. The same instructions were issued to those landladies keeping roomers off the campus to abide by the same rules. As the result, if one had a date for a downtown movie or school dance, one had to hurry back to the dormitory before the doors were locked. There were no restrictions in the boys' dormitory when I stayed there. However,*

### RULES CONCERNING CONDUCT OF THOSE REMAINING IN DORMITORIES

The following are the rules which will be found posted in the corridors and rooms of the dormitories. A careful observance of the same will keep you out of jail and make everyone associated with you happy.

1. Students who room in the halls are not permitted to do any cooking or self boarding [sic].
2. Do not deface the walls by means of nails or tacks; treat the room as you would your own home.
3. Your co-operation is very much needed in order to make this hall a quiet home-like place for yourself and for others who occupy it.
4. All of the rooms in the halls are reserved for those who board at the dining hall. This is an order of the Board of Education and no deviation can be made of it. If you desire private board call at the office and you will be given assistance in securing a desirable room outside. This requirement does not apply to the preceptress.
5. Do not neglect your room; keep it tidy at all times. It will add much to your comfort and no apologies need be made should unexpected visitors come to inspect our halls.
6. If you desire to be absent during study hour secure the permission of the preceptress before hand [sic].
7. If you feel that you cannot comply with these rules and such others as the preceptress may make, go to the office and make arrangements to vacate the room at once.
8. LOCK THE DOOR WHEN YOU LEAVE YOUR ROOM. [Capitalization in original]

--U. S. CONN

From *The Goldenrod*, June 3, 1918

*the lights always went out at 10:00 p.m. Most of the boys kept candles in case they stayed out late. . . .*

*In order that the students might receive the proper spiritual guidance, convocation was held in the auditorium of the administration building [Brandenburg's Ley Theatre] once or twice a week. There, presided over by Conn and the faculty, prayers were offered usually by some faculty member. At times local ministers were called upon. Fortunately, the U. S. Supreme Court has since declared such prayers in publicly-supported schools illegal. Policies affecting the students were also enunciated as well as various announcements. Seating was according to the alphabet and class and a check was made by the administration each time to determine if the students were in attendance. Sometimes 'pep rallies' were held before critical football and basketball games. [It should be noted that students and faculty would often also perform musical numbers and provide other entertainment during convocation as well.]*

He also points out that smoking and drinking on campus were strictly prohibited. This went for faculty as well as students. (See the sidebars on pages 8 & 9 on rules for students published in 1918)

### **RULES WHICH APPLY TO THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE ROOMS IN THE DORMITORIES**

Each girl who rooms in a private home should have a copy of the following rules and suggestions:

The following rules and suggestions are intended to assist in securing the co-operation of all concerned.

1. Reasonable notice of attention to change rooming places must be given to hostess and also to the office.
2. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday evenings are study nights. Students must not allow callers or social functions to interfere with their studies on these evenings.
3. All students must be in their respective rooming places by 10 p.m. and callers must not stay later than that hour. Normal School functions are justifiable exceptions to this rule. [Added two months later: "If a student wishes to be out later than ten o'clock she may do so with the approval of the Dean of Women]
4. The hostess must be notified if a student expects to be away from the house later than 10 p.m. Absence from town should be reported to the hostess after the approval of the President has been obtained, and address left. [This was amended to "approval of the Dean of Women" in September 1918]
5. The hostess must furnish suitable light for evening work.
6. Quiet for study hour should be observed after 7:30 p.m.
7. A room suitable for receiving callers should be accessible to students, as under no circumstances must a young woman entertain a young man in her room.

[The name of U.S. Conn does not appear at the bottom of this second list in June, but it did in September.]

From *The Goldenrod*, June 3, 1918

## CONN ON SALOONS IN WAYNE

An example of Conn's acting *in loco parentis* (and extending it to the City of Wayne) had come up in the early years of the State Normal. Recall that in the second installment of this look at the life of U. S. Conn *The Valentine Democrat* was quoted as stating “[t]he purchase of the college by the state will figure in the Wayne city election next spring on the saloon question and will aid the prohibitionists. All other towns in the state, where state normal are located, are ‘dry.’”

Saloons had been banned from Wayne for a year when a vote was taken in May 1911 to determine whether that policy should be continued for another year. There were 219 “wet” and 246 “dry” votes. There’s no record of President Conn’s taking a public stance on that 1911 vote. However, when the issue came up again in 1913 he did. On March 27, 1913 *The Wayne Herald* published a statement by President Conn on the issue:

*It is my opinion, and it is also the opinion of the heads of higher education everywhere, that saloons and institutions of learning should not be in the same town. I receive letters from many parents who indicate their desire to send their sons to a school where there are no saloons. We have used with profit to the school and pride to ourselves, the advertisement that Wayne has no saloons. Three or four hundred different young men attend the Normal each year. Their welfare demands that the allurements of the saloon be kept away from them. In securing the location of the State Normal, Wayne has assumed the moral obligation of keeping the city as free as possible from those things which tend to lower manhood. Our young men are away from the home and are entitled to the best influence which the school and town affords. Aside from all other considerations the welfare of the young men in the Normal demands that Wayne cannot afford to return to the saloon. I hope that every voter in Wayne will cast his vote on this proposition, and I also hope that the result will be so overwhelming for a dry policy that the matter will be settled for all time to come. In no other way can the city of Wayne contribute more toward building up a great normal school.*

There’s no way to know with certainty whether Conn’s appeal against saloons swayed any voters, but the results of the election showed that of the 453 votes cast there were 252 “dry” votes compared to only 201 “wet.” There would continue to be no saloons in Wayne—but not “*for all time to come.*”

## BILLY SUNDAY

Billy Sunday (1862-1935), the popular evangelist, conducted a revival campaign in Sioux City in 1921. On October 13, 1921 *The Wayne Herald* reported that

President U. S. Conn, Burret Wright, Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Gildersleeve and Rev. and Mrs. William Kilburn drove to Sioux City yesterday to confer with "Billy" Sunday's manager on the proposi[tion] of the evangelist coming to Wayne some Monday during his Sioux City campaign.

Reverend William Kilburn was pastor of the Methodist Church in Wayne. Charles E. Gildersleeve (1861-1953) was a retired farmer (an interesting aside: one of the pallbearers at his funeral was Edward Seymour, father of Lyle Seymour, future Wayne State College president). Burret Wright (1884-1969) was a Wayne businessman and a charter member of the Wayne Kiwanis Club. Both were members of the Methodist Church.

There's no follow up story in the Wayne Herald about the meeting, but it seems as if they did not succeed—no report of Billy Sunday coming to Wayne has been found.

Billy Sunday preached strongly against alcohol. He's credited with inspiring popular support for Prohibition. But the Eighteenth Amendment had already been ratified in 1919, so this group was not likely asking Sunday to preach a sermon on temperance unless it was to reinforce support for Prohibition—particularly in a town with a normal school. Perhaps President Conn and the others simply admired his "homespun preaching" and wanted him to bring his conservative Christian message to Wayne.

**GOD'S INSTRUMENT IN COMBATTING THE EVILS OF OUR DAY**

**"BILLY" SUNDAY**  
The Man and His Message  
With his Own Words Which Have Won  
Thousands for Christ

Edited by  
**WILLIAM T. ELLIS, L.L.D.**  
Author of "The New Religion"

This work contains the heart of Mr. Sunday's message arranged by editors and is published by special agreement with him for the use of such readable names and every photograph.

**CARRIES THE MESSAGE THAT LED OVER 200,000 TO HIT THE SAWDUST TRAIL**

**GOD'S MAN SENT IN GOD'S TIME**

**More Than One Political Revolution**

**TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN**

**"BILLY" SUNDAY "DELIVERS THE GOODS"**

**AN OLD-FASHIONED PREACHER OF THE OLD-TIME RELIGION**

**TURN AWAY FROM THE OLD RELIGION**

**A LAVISH ARRAY OF AUTHORITATIVE PICTURES ILLUSTRATE MR. SUNDAY'S MESSAGE**

**CONN ON COMPANIONATE MARRIAGE**

As mentioned above, Conn occasionally spoke at the Presbyterian Church in town. One such address was on March 25, 1928. The topic was companionate marriage. The address demonstrates his support of traditional marriage vs. companionate marriage.

The term “*companionate marriage*” was introduced in the 1920s “*to describe a transformation in the social and economic functions of marriage for middle-class, and predominantly white, American families.*” (Rebecca L. Davis, “‘Not Marriage at All, but Simple Harlotry’: The Companionate Marriage Controversy,” *The Journal of American History*, March 2008)

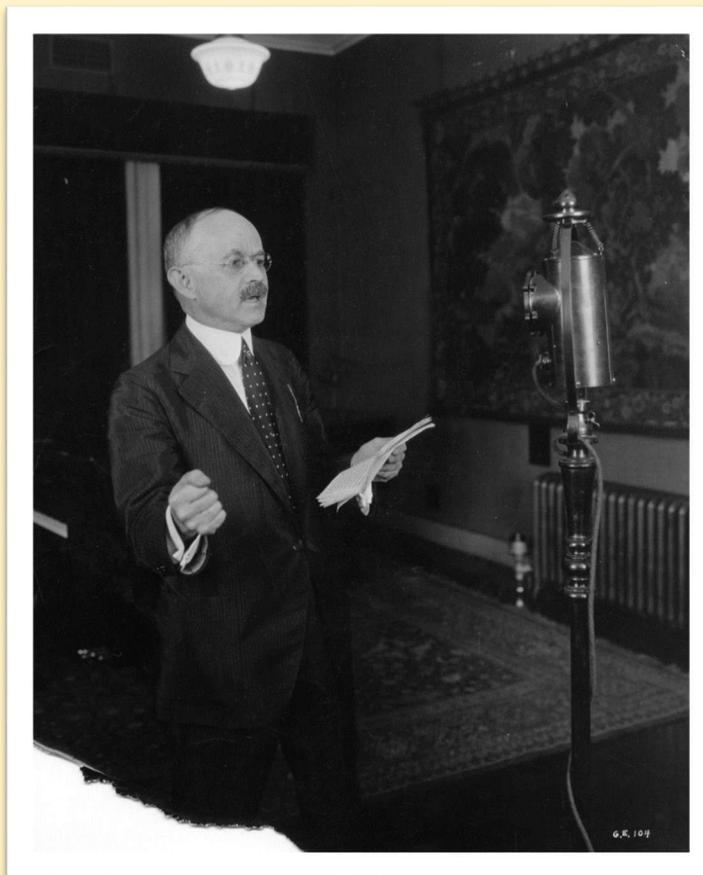
While different groups gave differing nuance to the term, companionate marriage generally meant a marriage in which the spouses chose to be childless (this coinciding with the growing birth control movement). It also meant changing divorce laws to make it far easier for couples to obtain a divorce (with no alimony). Some likened it to “*trial marriage.*” Some also believed that companionate couples should be free to carry on affairs outside the marriage.

Judge Benjamin Barr Lindsey (1869-1943) of Denver was nationally known for his reforms in the juvenile justice system. He also was a strong advocate for companionate marriage, writing a series of articles in *Redbook* (1926 and 1927) and a book, *The Companionate Marriage* (1927), with journalist Wainwright Evans on the subject. A silent movie, also with the title “The Companionate Marriage,” based on examples in the book, was released the following year (the movie is now considered lost).

Lindsey spoke on radio and went on a lecture tour to promote the idea of companionate marriage which he saw as a rejection of puritanical morality and an acceptance of changing sexual mores.

Kent Blaser wrote in *Far from Normal* that Lindsey spoke on the Wayne State College campus “*to a large audience*” twice. Blaser does not give dates or a source for accounts of these appearances and so far attempts to locate accounts in either *The Wayne Herald* or *The Goldenrod* have been unsuccessful. Blaser comments that President Conn had given “*some friendly criticism*” on the occasion of Lindsey’s visits.

An account of Conn’s speaking on companionate marriage at the Presbyterian Church was published in *The Goldenrod* on April 2, 1928.



Judge Benjamin Barr Lindsey

*President U. S. Conn gave an intensely interesting talk on “Companionate Marriage” at the Presbyterian [C]hurch Sunday evening March 25th. A large crowd enjoyed the lecture. College students were especially numerous.*

*Dr. Conn argued against the companionate system on the ground that it tends to break up the home and take marriage out of the hands of the church. There seems to be no reasonable argument for the system. The home is that basis of our existing civilization. It has its basis on love. Compassionate marriage is based not on love but on passion. Rome rose to heights of fame on love, but when passion took Love’s place, that great empire crumbled and fell to rise no more.*

*It is to be deplored that a man of such caliber as Judge Ben Lindsay [sic] should be the one to introduce the idea. In his judgeship in Denver Lindsay [sic] has done monumental work, a work which has had far reaching effect on our handling of juvenile delinquency. But the Judge has seen so much of the seamy side of life that his judgment is warped. He has seen so many unhappy combinations, that he doubts that there are many happy ones in existence. Statistics indicate, however, that while divorcing is rapidly on the increase, the number of happy homes exceeds the less happy homes by a goodly margin.*

*This companionate idea, if adopted, would obliterate a system which has come up through conscious evolution from prehistoric times. In the beginning polygamy was not only [countenanced but was the social requirement. Evolution has changed] it to monogamy. Now these “New Thought” people would have us substitute companionate marriage for monogamy and that means virtually changing from monogamy to polygamy again. [Note: two lines in the above were transposed in the original; the obviously intended order was restored.]*

*Dr. Conn, in his address, emphasized the need of stringent Federal divorce and marriage laws which would require a certain length of time for courtship, would restrict the number of legal causes for divorce and eliminate tax laws now enacted. Nevada, [through] the laxity of its divorce laws, is a Mecca for that type of people who perennially choose new mates. If a couple cannot be divorced in one state, they go to another where laws are less strict. It is imperative that a federal uniform law of marriage and divorce be enacted to protect American homes and American civilization from the encroachment of systems like companionate marriage which can only mean social and economic chaos in the end.*

This may or may not be an example of the “friendly criticism” that Blaser refers to, but, while the account is only the reporter’s summary of what Conn said with no direct quotes, this particular address by Conn appears to have been less than friendly toward Lindsey.

## SUMMARY

From these short notices and a few of the longer articles we are able to know a little more of the life of U. S. Conn, but, they are only glimpses into his life. It would add so much to filling out the picture of his life to have stories of his fishing trips and travels in his own words, or, at least the words of his wife or daughter; to be able to read his own account of his land investments and other business dealings; to hear him explain his faith and values in greater depth than the few examples we have. Having photographs, too, would add so much. It would also be helpful in having more personal accounts from those who knew U. S. Conn, such as the reminiscences of Roy Mattison, for balance.

For the most part this Archival Minute has focused on Conn's life outside academia. The next will examine his presidency more directly.

